

Another alarming aspect of this trend is the growing number of restrictions that government at all levels is putting on the land that does remain in private hands.

A few years ago, the National Home Builders Association told me if there was strict enforcement of the wetlands rules and regulations, over 60 percent of the developable land would be off limits for homes.

Now some who already have nice homes might think this would be good, to stop most development. But you cannot stop it, because the population keeps growing, and people have to have someplace to live.

So what happens? When government keeps buying and restricting more and more land, it does two things: It drives up the costs and causes more and more people to be jammed closer and closer together.

First, it drives up land and building costs so that many young or lower income families are priced out of the housing market, especially for new homes.

Second, it forces developers to build on smaller and smaller postage-stamp-size lots or build townhouses or apartments.

Do you ever wonder why subdivisions built in the 1950s or 1960s often have big yards and now new subdivisions do not, or why new homes that should cost \$50 a square foot now cost \$100 a square foot or more? It is in large part because government keeps buying or restricting so much land.

This trend is causing more and more people to be jammed into smaller and smaller areas, increasing traffic, pollution, crime, and just an overall feeling of being overcrowded.

It is sometimes referred to as the urban sprawl, and environmental extremists are attacking it because they know it is unpopular, but they are the very people who have caused it.

Most of these environmental extremists come from very wealthy families, and they probably have nice homes already or even second homes in the country.

But it is not fair and it is not right, Mr. Speaker, for the people who already have what they want to demand policies that drive up the costs and put an important part of the American dream out of reach for millions of younger or lower income people.

Make no mistake about it, when government buys or restricts more and more land, it drives up the costs of the rest of the land. And this hurts poor and lower income and middle income people the most.

Even those forced to live in apartments are hurt, because apartment developers have to pass their exorbitant land and regulatory costs on to their tenants. When government takes land, they almost always take it from poor or lower income people or small farmers.

We have way too many industrial parks in this country today. States and local governments, which do almost nothing for older small businesses, will give almost anything to some big company to move from someplace else.

Is it right for governments to take property for very little paid to small farmers and then give it to big foreign or multinational companies or even to big companies to develop resort areas for the wealthy? I do not think so.

One of the most important things we need to do to insure future prosperity is to stop government at all levels from taking over more private property. Anyone who does not understand this should read a book called *The Noblest Triumph, Property and Prosperity Through the Ages* by Tom Bethell. The whole book is important, but a couple of brief excerpts: The Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman has said, "You cannot have a free society without private property? Recent immigrants have been delighted to find you can buy property in the United States without paying bribes."

The call for secure property rights in Third World countries today is not an attempt to help the rich. It is not the property of those who have access to Swiss bank accounts that needs to be protected. It is the small and insecure possessions of the poor.

This key point was well understood by Pope Leo XIII who wrote that the fundamental principle of socialism, which would make all possessions public property, is to be utterly rejected because it injures the very ones whom it seeks to help."

Over the years, when government has taken private property, it has most often taken it from lower and middle income people and small farmers. Today, federal, state and local governments, and quasi-governmental agencies now own about half the land in this Nation. The most disturbing thing is the rapid rate at which this taking has increased in the last 40 years. Environmentalists who have supported most of this should realize that the worst polluters in the world have been the socialist nations, because their economies do not generate enough income to do good things for the environment, and that private property is almost always better cared for than public property and at a much lower cost.

ELECTION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, last week, I announced the introduction of a resolution calling on Congress to enact meaningful election reform legislation.

Today, I am proud to introduce another measure on election reform and to announce an important voting technology demonstration I am sponsoring

tomorrow with my former secretary of state colleagues who are presently now in the House and the Senate.

I am pleased to introduce legislation today to improve the voting process for millions of elderly Americans and persons with disabilities.

In every election year, many of these people stay at home, stay away from the polls, not from apathy but from concern about their ability to cast a vote independently. The elderly and visually impaired may not be able to decipher small print or confusing ballots, and people in wheelchairs may have difficulty maneuvering in older voting booths.

Unfortunately, this problem is pervasive throughout the United States. With nearly one in five Americans having some level of disability and approximately 35 million Americans over the age of 65, we must act now to ensure that our voting system is accessible to all Americans.

To ensure that Americans are not discouraged from voting because of outdated voting equipment and inaccessible voting places, I am introducing the Voting Opportunity through Technology and Education, or VOTE, Act. This measure would require the Federal Election Commission to establish voluntary accessibility and ease-of-use standards for polling places in voting equipment.

In 1984, Congress passed the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act. This legislation required that all polling places in the United States be made accessible to the elderly and the disabled, but provided the FEC with little enforcement power. With the establishment of the new accessibility and ease-of-use standards in my VOTE Act, the FEC would be able to provide secretaries of state and election administrators with more information and support services to help them comply with accessible laws.

Additionally, the voting technology industry could use these standards to ensure that their products may be correctly used by all Americans at the polls. Finally, the VOTE Act would provide grants to States so that they may improve their voting systems and educate poll workers and voters about the availability and benefits of these new technologies.

Mr. Speaker, I know first-hand how modern voting systems can increase voter turnout and improve accuracy. As a secretary of state for the State of Rhode Island, I was the chief architect of a plan to upgrade the State's voting system and equipment. The replacement of outdated lever machines with optical scan equipment and Braille and tactile ballots helped increase voter turnout and significantly reduced chances of error.

To highlight this equipment, as well as other voting technologies now available, I am joining former secretaries of

state now in Congress, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), in hosting the voting technology demonstration on Thursday, March 22. There we will address our own work at the State level to improve voting accountability and accuracy and demonstrate the various forms of election equipment, including punchcard ballot, optical scan and direct recording electronic systems.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to attend this educational event, as it will help prepare us for a nationwide discussion on election reform. Additionally, I ask that my colleagues join me in supporting this VOTE Act to make voting one of the greatest expressions of civic participation available on an equal basis to all Americans.

REINTRODUCTION OF CHILD HANDGUN INJURY PREVENTION ACT, H.R. 1014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, we continue to observe school shootings, and I am concerned that we have yet to pass strong gun safety legislation.

Despite recent polls by CBS and the New York Times which suggest that 70 percent of American people favor stricter handgun laws, Congress continues to ignore the public's concerns.

January 10, in Ventura County, California, a 17-year-old student held a classmate at gunpoint during the school's lunch break. The gunman was fatally wounded by police.

January 12, 2001, in my district, Indianapolis, Indiana, a 4-year-old boy shot himself with a pistol he found in his mother's pocketbook.

February 7, 2001 in Dallas, Texas, a 14-year-old boy fired a gun in the direction of classmates while on school grounds.

March 6, in Santee, California, a 15-year-old boy took a .22-caliber long-barrel revolver from his father's locked collection of weapons and killed two schoolmates, while injuring 13 others.

March 7, this year, Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, a 14-year-old girl shot a female classmate in the shoulder in the cafeteria of a parochial school.

March 7, Prince Georges County, Maryland, a 14-year-old boy shot and wounded another teenager outside Largo Senior High School.

From 1987 to 1996, nearly 2,200 American children, 14 years of age and younger, died from unintentional shootings. What are we waiting for? We must not allow these tragedies to become an everyday part of American life. We must not be apathetic.

While firearm fatalities cost America more money than any of the other four

leading causes of death, guns are the only consumer product in America, except tobacco, which are exempt from health care and safety regulations. Sadly, guns continue to be exempt from Federal oversight, and consumer protection laws continue to be tougher on toy guns than on real guns.

The history of consumer product regulation teaches us that significant numbers of death and illnesses can be preserved when health and safety regulations exist. The Poison Prevention Packaging Act requires child-resistant packaging. The Consumer Federation of America estimates that more than 700 children have avoided accidental poisonings. Also, the introduction of sleep wear and toy standards have saved children's lives.

I ask my colleagues to join me in the bill that I introduced last week, the Child Handgun Injury Prevention Act, H.R. 1014. It requires manufacturers' safety devices.

We introduced it in another bill that requires training to entitle you to have licenses. H.R. 1014 requires the Secretary of the Treasury to mandate all newly manufactured handguns come equipped with child safety devices, and it would establish a Federal standard for the devices.

We can do nothing less than to ensure the future safety of our children and prevent them from unintentional handgun injury. We need to require safety devices that meet the rigid tests by the Department of the Treasury.

I encourage each Member of the House of Representatives to join me in this effort.

□ 1230

TRIBUTE TO BRET TARVER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, Phoenix, Arizona, has now grown to be the sixth largest city in our country. Yet over the course of the last 7 days, the entire city and surrounding areas have seen the frenetic pace of life come virtually to a standstill as the community has paused to honor one of our fallen fire fighters.

A week ago today, in responding to a blaze at a supermarket, Phoenix fire fighter Bret Tarver gave his life. For his wife, Robin, for their three young daughters, for the Phoenix Fire Department, for brother and sister fire fighters across the country and for all Arizonans, this is an exceptional loss.

Bret Tarver was born 40 years ago in what is now the 6th Congressional District of Arizona in Cave Creek. He and his wife, Robin, and their daughters recently made their home in another area of the district, Queen Creek, Ari-

zona. That is because Bret was a lifelong outdoors enthusiast. He loved hunting and fishing. He loved nature. But most of all, he loved his family, and he loved being a public servant.

Mr. Speaker, all too often, during the course of political discourse, we describe elective office as public service. Mr. Speaker, how incomplete a definition that is. Public service can take many forms. The citizen can volunteer. He can be involved in civic clubs or spiritual organizations. Yet the ultimate public service all too often comes from our public safety officers who here at home are called upon to put their lives on the line.

So it was one week ago on a Wednesday with the sun shining and the flowers blooming and spring training and all the frenetic activity so common to the desert southwest that an event sadly too common, a fire in uncommon and tragic fashion, ended the life of an uncommon man.

Colleagues describe Bret Tarver as a gentle giant, a man who stood over 6 feet 3 inches, who tipped the scales at well over 200 pounds, who had tremendously big hands, but often would envelope the tiny hands of his daughters and other kids on their soccer team in his own, one who inspired trust, one who worked tirelessly in his chosen profession as a fire fighter.

Mr. Speaker, when so many of that calling have come to Washington this week, perhaps the greatest tribute we can pay to the memory of Bret Tarver is to pause and appreciate the service and the sacrifice of every one of those fire fighters who put their lives on the line who in so many ways, in so many manifestations, work for the public good and the public safety, and who sadly, in the case of Bret Tarver, pay the ultimate sacrifice as a part of public service.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues join me in expressing sympathies and encouraging prayer for Bret's widow, Robin, for his three daughters, for the strapping brothers that made up an active household years ago who mourn his loss, for his parents, for his fellow fire fighters, and for the people of Phoenix and the surrounding area.

Mr. Speaker, we pause to remember Bret Tarver, his sacrifice, his legacy, and the shining example of true public service that he represented so well and so faithfully.

TIME TO MOVE TOWARDS ENERGY INDEPENDENCE IN OUR COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH) because, last year, the city of Houston lost two fire fighters. It is appropriate that we remember the Tarver family and their